ON A PECULIAR RINGED AFFECTION OF THE PREPUCE AND GLANS.*

By R. W. TAYLOR, M.D.,
SURGEON TO CHARITY HOSPITAL, N. Y.

THE three cases which follow illustrate a peculiar and interesting affection which has not heretofore been described.

Case 1.—In January, 1874, an eminent practitioner of New York consulted me regarding an affection of the penis which caused him much uneasiness of mind. He was a large, portly man, thirty-eight years of age, having enjoyed perfect health, with the exception of occasional attacks of migraine. His family medical history was excellent, and he himself had led a prudent life. Some few weeks before he consulted me he felt slight pricking and even painful sensations in the penis toward the glans. As he walked, the movement of the organ or the pressure of the clothes caused slight uneasiness. Very soon he noticed certain peculiar scaling rings on the prepuce and glans, near the insertion of the frænum. When he came to me, the following appearances were noted: On retraction of the prepuce, chiefly on the left but also on the right side, there were in all about six scaling rings. These efflorescences were of a diameter of from one quarter to one third of an inch, and were very slightly reddened, covered with a thin, quite adherent layer of epidermis, and in width were about one third of one line. The redness, slight as it was, was sharply limited to the morbid circle, and the enclosed mucous membrane was apparently normal. If any of these rings were pinched between the fingers, no thickening was appreciable, nor did they in any way seem to cause any

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interference in the mobility of the parts. From a careful study I was convinced that the lesion consisted in hyperæmia and slight increase in the epithelial layers of the parts. The patient had consulted Drs. Van Buren and Weir, who had not at that time seen a similar case. His chief anxiety consisted in a fear that the affection was a commencing epithelioma. Though seemingly insignificant and superficial, these lesions were very persistent, and only disappeared after an existence of several months under an arsenical treatment. The patient took Fowler's solution in small doses, and it was only when fifteen drops thrice daily were taken that full involution of the rings occurred. As they disappeared, the itching, pricking, and painful sensations gradually subsided.

Besides this peculiar eruption on the penis, a few months later the patient had three papules on the right foot, which appeared to be those of lichen planus. The number of papules was increased by the appearance of several on the dorsal aspect of the foot, but they did not disappear under the use of arsenic as did the rings on the penis. In September, 1875, these rings returned, and this time they looked shiny and micaceous. At the same time patient had the same painful sensations as in the former attack, and he felt spots on the penis, which presented no abnormal appearances, yet which were hyperæsthetic even upon light pressure. Besides these morbid phenomena, the patient suffered from an uneasy sensation about the right hip, upon the skin of which he had fugitive sensations, such as accompany goose-flesh. This attack lasted about two months, and left the patient well, except that he had the hyperæsthetic condition of penis upon movement or pressure. Early in January, 1876, the patient suffered from a relapse of his scaling affection of the penis, and at the same time he had several papules bearing the appearance of lichen planus. He underwent further treatment, was cured, and until to-day had not had a relapse, but the slight hyperæsthesia of penis is felt from time to time.

Case 2.—A gentleman, an American, of full habit, thirty years of age, having had gonorrhœa two years previously, which had been complicated by right orchi-epididymitis, consulted me in July, 1878, for an affection of the prepuce and glans. He was a man free from any diathesis, and of healthy parentage. His orchi-epididymitis, which had been treated by me, was followed by more or less severe paroxysmal attacks of hyperæsthesia and neuralgia of the right side of the scrotum and corresponding

crural surface, with occasional fugitive neuralgic pains in the hip of the same side. Under internal and external remedies the induration in the epididymis was much resolved, and the painful sensations were nearly wholly relieved. Still any fatigue, exposure to cold, or excess in eating and drinking was almost certainly followed by an exacerbation of this trouble. Otherwise he had noticed nothing abnormal until May of 1878, two months previous to his visit to me in July of same year. He then began to experience a sensation of slight heat and itching in the prepuce and glans, which caused him to pull and press the end of the penis for relief. Occasionally this patient, as did the first, experienced a sensation as though a pin was pricking his prepuce. In the latter part of June, while on his return from the Continent, he found upon the prepuce, the fossa glandis, and on the posterior portion of the glans, several rings, which he said increased in number very rapidly until he came to me. I found about eight fully formed rings and a number of incomplete ones. On the right side of the prepuce a ring one half inch in diameter enclosed another of about half the size. These rings were similar to those of the first case, slightly elevated, though not perceptibly thickened. When examined by oblique light they were seen to be distinctly but slightly elevated. They were not very markedly hyperæmic, nor was there much hyperæmia at their margins. The scales covering them were of a dull gray color and quite adherent, but were thrown off in small quantities every day. This patient was also treated with arsenic, and at the end of a month, when he was taking ten drops of Fowler's solution thrice daily, these lesions disappeared. He had a similar relapse in 1879, and for more than a year experienced the peculiar neurotic sensations already spoken of.

Case 3.—A gentleman, thirty-six years of age, thin but wiry, of nervous temperament, given to high living, consulted me January 27, 1884. He had enjoyed excellent health through life, but had suffered from gonorrhœa in 1874. In 1880 he had several chancroids, which had been very actively, even severely, cauterized by a country physician. Having a long, tight prepuce, he after this suffered from repeated attacks of balanitis. In July, 1883, he noticed a number of small rings on the glans and prepuce; these were chiefly annoying by reason of the burning and pricking sensations which accompanied them. They disappeared under external treatment, and returned again in December of that year. When I saw him first in January, 1884, he had four typical rings such as were described in the first case. Under arsenic he was

cured in four weeks. Locally he used simply a thin layer of absorbent cotton.

The clinical features of this interesting affection are, then, slightly elevated very narrow rings of reddened mucous membrane, with very well-marked but thin layer of epithelial scales superimposed. There was no areola; in fact the limitation of the morbid process was very sharp, the enclosed area of tissue being normal. In general, rings of from one quarter to one third of an inch were seen, but occasionally they had a diameter of half an inch. Segments of circles more or less complete were seen. The affection was preceded and accompanied in all instances by unpleasant painful sensations, which in one instance were very severe, and even persisted on the site of the lesion after their disappearance. No scar or loss of tissue was observed after their involution.

It would seem that the rings remain stationary for several weeks, and that these were liable to be followed by new ones, in all cases the prodromal nervous sensations being felt.

As to etiology, I am disposed to regard the cause as of neurotic origin. In the first case, though the patient suffered from migraine, there was no local cause discoverable; still the painful symptoms were very marked, and at one time were accompanied by painful sensations in the hip of the corresponding side. Of the two other cases, one patient suffered from orchi-epididymitis, and the other from balanitis and tenderness of the prepuce, due to severe cauterization. Instances are not infrequent, though, in which reflex pain about the scrotum and inguinal region are due to this affection of the testicle. Then, again, it is well known that relapsing herpes progenitalis has often followed severe cauterization in subjects previously free from that affection. Whether these

analogical facts will help us in explaining the origin of the affection in the two last cases I am unable to say, still it is within the bounds of credence that the affection was in them due to reflex irritation. As to diagnosis, little need be said. The affection is so clearly marked in its appearance and history that it can be readily diagnosticated. It may be well to add that the ringed form of the erythematous syphilide, the same form of the papular syphilide, psoriasis in rings, tinea tonsurans (J. C. White), lupus erythematosus, may be found on the glans and prepuce.

The treatment found most efficacious by me was Fowler's solution of arsenic, pushed even to the extent of fifteen drops thrice daily.

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